

Open Space and Recreation Plan

*Mendon, Massachusetts
2006-2013*

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Section 1 – Plan Summary

The Mendon 2006 Open Space and Recreation Plan is designed to serve as a comprehensive guide to plan Mendon's future in terms of preserving critical parcels of land for resource protection and passive recreation enjoyment, balanced with providing active recreational facilities to meet the needs of Mendon's growing population. The plan reflects the vision of Mendon's residents, the expertise of the town boards and the analysis of the data collected during this project.

The overall goals for this project are:

1. To protect critical parcels of land for conservation and passive recreation
2. To provide active recreation areas to meet the needs of Mendon's growing population
3. To access funding and land protection strategies to protect or purchase land for open space or recreation
4. To protect the town's water resources (wetlands, ponds, aquifers etc.)
5. To provide support to farmers who want to keep their land in agriculture and maintain productive farms
6. To help guide business and residential development to shape Mendon's growth, avoiding haphazard development
7. To provide cemetery space for future needs
8. To assist in the acquisition of land for the Town of Mendon's needs
9. To work toward the goal of 10% affordable housing units for the Town of Mendon

Section 2 – Introduction

A. Statement of Purpose

Mendon has made many strides forward in the last five years since the last Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) was written. The purpose of this OSRP plan is to update the needs and goals for Mendon, in terms of open space and recreation and to articulate how Mendon hopes to accomplish meeting these goals. This OSRP will serve as a framework and reference to guide the Town of Mendon to work toward achieving the goals set forth in this OSRP plan.

The major reason that this plan was developed is because of the intense pressure for residential development in Mendon, which affects both the recreational facilities and the open space. Factors putting pressure on Mendon include; first, the towns around Mendon are reaching build out capacity and the growth is rapidly moving to Mendon. Second, the connection of Route 146 and the Massachusetts Turnpike has made commuting from Mendon easier. Third, with the increase of new families in town, Mendon needs to build recreational facilities to meet the needs of the growing population. Fourth, Mendon has retained much of its rural character making it an attractive town in which to live. Mendon still has a good portion of land that is open space. Although the Town has worked to preserve land, most of the open space is not permanently protected. This plan will be a foundation to guide Mendon's growth, avoiding unplanned development.

The Town of Mendon has accomplished many of the ongoing objectives set forth in the previous OSRP. The accomplishments follow.

- In 2001, the Town of Mendon purchased land from three separate landowners. The first piece was the 150-acre Wood property, the second was the 96-acre Kelly Farm and the third was the 14-acre Paddock property. These three land purchases helped to complete an 800-acre tract of contiguous, protected open space, which straddles the Towns of Mendon and Blackstone. These purchases were done with collaboration between, the MA. Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, the Metacomet Land Trust, the Mendon Land Use Committee, other Town boards and a private donor. Much of this open space that the Town protected is designated as *Core Habitat and Supporting Natural Landscape* by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program's BioMap.
- In 1999-2000, a summer day camp program was started at the Memorial Field and Town Beach Area.
- In 2001, John Gannett donated 29+ acres to the Town to be used as open space or open space and a library. This land has a river running through it and abuts hundreds of acres of open space. It has a high potential for trails and outdoor environmental education programs.

- In 2001, the Town passed a *Rate of Development* Bylaw, which allowed only 39 new building permits for residential units to be issued each year through 2006, in order for the Town of Mendon to promote orderly growth.
- In 2002, after much education and community outreach, the Mendon voters passed the Community Preservation Act. Voters approved a surcharge on real property at 3% of the annual real estate tax levy against real property; with an exemption from such surcharge of \$100,000 of the value of each taxable parcel of residential real property.
- In 2002, a soccer field was created on Town-owned land. Grover Field is constantly in use during the spring and fall soccer seasons.
- In 2002, 50 acres of open fields on the Town-owned Kelly Farm was leased to a Mendon dairy farmer to reseed and hay the fields. This was done to maintain the open fields and forest edges to encourage a diversity of plants and wildlife, at no cost to the Town. It was also done to support the survival of one of the last working farms in Mendon.
- In 2003, a handicapped accessible bathroom was built for Memorial Field.
- In 2003, the Land Use Committee worked with MassGIS to update the mapping data on Mendon. A CD was developed specifically for Mendon where parcel lines were included which could be layered with other important data, such as the Mass BioMap. This has been very helpful in identifying who owned the environmentally sensitive land in Mendon and therefore, where the Town needed to target land protection efforts.
- In 2003, a mobile classroom was moved to Memorial Field to be used for the recreation program.
- In 2004, the Planning Board coordinated the compilation of the Community Development Plan for Mendon. This included compiling a profile for Mendon, defining its strengths and weaknesses and developing an action plan. This report compliments the OSRP.
- In 2004, an Affordable Housing Overlay District was approved by voters in an area in the southeastern part of Mendon on Route 140 (see zoning map). This affects open space by helping to relieve the pressure of 40B Comprehensive permits on the Town's resources.
- In 2005, the Town purchased the 78-acre Fino property of which 24 acres of the land was preserved as open space and paid for with CPA funds. The rest of the land is planned for commercial development, potential municipal use, affordable housing and standard housing all designed to fit with Mendon's rural character. This development hopes to generate funds to pay off the debt incurred from buying the property.
- In 2005, forest stewardship plans were developed for the Town-owned properties. Boy Scout Troop 44 camped several times on the Town-owned Kelly Farm property and worked with the forester to blaze the borders of the property and perform wildlife cutting of trees to create nesting sites for birds and mammals.

- In 2005, in conjunction with the Bay State Trail Riders Association, a loop trail was cleared from old cart paths, with available parking for horse trailers. An Eagle Scout built picnic tables, fixed the stonewall at the entrance to the parking area and made a kiosk with maps of the trails to have available at the trailhead.
- In 2005, a handicapped playground was built by “My One Wish Foundation.” An appropriate surface for wheelchairs needs to be put in for the floor of the playground to complete the project.
- In 2005, eight new Scenic Roads were added to Mendon’s Scenic Road Bylaw. This makes a total of 15 Scenic roads in Mendon. Designating these roads will help preserve the historic trees and stone walls along these roads, as well as protect roadside scenic vistas. See Historic Resources Map in the Community Setting section to see where the roads are located.
- In 2005, a Groundwater Protection District was proposed at a town meeting. Much work was done to analyze how to promote safe drinking water and to conserve and prevent contamination of Mendon’s environment. The Planning Board is still addressing this issue, since it did not get voted into law.
- In 2005, Charles Allaire donated 15+ acres that abuts hundreds of acres of open space and has a river running through the property.

Mendon has met many of the goals from the last OSRP, but there is still more to do.

The Land Use Committee and the Community Preservation Committee continue to protect land. The Town of Mendon currently has 2,456 acres of land under Chapter 61, Chapter 61A and Chapter 61B, but the majority of open space in Mendon is not permanently protected. The Land Use Committee is currently consulting with private landowners who are interested in possibly putting conservation restrictions on their land.

The Park Commissioners have expanded the park programs and recreational facilities for Mendon over the past five years, but see many projects that still need to be done to serve Mendon’s growing population.

B. Planning Process and Public Participation

The primary data collectors and writers of the 2006 Mendon Open Space And Recreation Plan include Mendon Land Use Committee members: Kathy Coffey-Daniels, Planning Board Representative; Peter Coffin, Conservation Commission Representative; Sharon Cutler, Selectman Representative; Anne Mazar, Chair and Member-at-Large, and Mike Plumb, Member-at-Large and environmental engineer, as well as, Karen O’Brien, Park Commissioner, Terry Duplin, Administrative Assistant to the Parks Department, Thomas D. Hackenson, Mendon Building Inspector and Peg Tetreault, Administrative Assistant.

The Land Use Committee balanced the information from the community, the experience and expertise of the various town boards with the data and maps to develop the 2006 Mendon Open Space And Recreation Plan.

One source of data was the town-wide survey that the Land Use Committee distributed. In October of 2005, a survey (Appendix A) was mailed out to every Mendon resident, business and town committee. 196 of the surveys were returned which was about a 9% return rate. The results can be seen in Appendix B. An article was also written in the local paper about the survey results (Appendix C).

Another source of valuable data was information solicited from various people on the following committees including: the Conservation Commission, the Park Commissioners, Community Preservation Committee, the Mendon-Upton Youth Soccer Association, the Mendon Junior Baseball-Softball League, the Planning Board, the Town Clerk, the Mendon Town Assistant Assessor, the Town Administrative Assistant and the Selectmen.

An ongoing source of information from the public was the annual assessment of the Land Use Committee's Five-Year Action Plan, which is a direct reflection of the OSRP goals. The Five-Year Plan was available to the public at the Taft Public Library and at Town Hall. Each year, for the past five years, the Selectmen have held a public hearing on the Five-Year Action Plan. Every spring the Land Use Committee contacted all the town boards and committees through a memo requesting feedback. Finally, at each of the last five Mendon Annual Town Meetings, the Five-Year Action Plan was presented and it was always unanimously approved.

The 2006 Open Space and Recreation Plan was given to the Planning Board, the three Selectmen, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, the Board of Health, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Conservation Commission and the Park Commissioners. Their letters of review and comments are included in Section 10 – Public Comments.

The Land Use Committee met approximately once a month and all meetings were posted and open to the public.

Section 3 – Community Setting

A. Regional Context

Mendon is a hilltop community located in the historical Blackstone River Valley. According to the Department of Housing and Community Development's profile of Mendon, it has one of the best-preserved Federal Greek Revival hilltop village centers in the state, with large tracts of open land adjacent to the center.

Mendon finds itself in a convenient location to three urban areas: 33 miles southwest of Boston; 28 miles north of Providence, Rhode Island; and 18 miles southeast of Worcester. As mentioned in the Statement of Purpose, Mendon will feel the pressure of rapid growth with the connection to Route 146 and the Massachusetts Turnpike, and easy access to Route 495, and as the surrounding towns reach build-out capacity.

Mendon is predominantly a middle to upper-middle class residential community. Most of the houses in Mendon are single unit. According to the 2000 US Census Report there were 88.9% single unit houses as compared to 59.8% in Worcester County. Also in 2000, 84.3% of the units in Mendon were owner occupied and 75.6 % of the houses in Mendon had 3-4 bedrooms. The average number of people per household in 2000 was 2.9, higher than the Worcester County average of 2.56. In 2000, there were only 3.8% vacant houses. In 2005, local realtors could not find enough houses or land to meet the demand of people wanting to move into Mendon. Mendon is a growing residential community.

Mendon is part of the Blackstone River Watershed Association. BRWA was established in 1976 to preserve, protect and enhance the environmental quality and recreational opportunities of the Blackstone River and its tributaries. Mendon has worked with BRWA for water quality projects, storm water management and other regional activities.

A point worth mentioning is that there is a need to protect the drinking water aquifers in Mendon, because of the activities in and around Mendon. There are several proposed and approved power plants in the towns surrounding Mendon. Within Mendon, Miscoe Spring Beverage Co. bottles spring water for retail distribution from an underground spring in the northwest area of town. Mendon relies almost entirely on private wells and with the increase in residential development, there is a need to continue to identify the land parcels where the drinking water aquifers are recharged and take actions to protect those areas. Natural resources do not follow town lines. We need to be aware of what towns bordering Mendon are doing and keep the communication lines between towns open.

Mendon has good potential for establishing protected greenway corridors in several parts of town. One significant area is around the southeast corner of Mendon and the Blackstone town line. The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife manages 375 acres that runs from Mendon into Blackstone. This land also connects to the spectacular 180-acre Daniel's Farm in Blackstone that was recently donated to the Metacomet Land Trust. Since the last OSRP in 2000, the Town of Mendon has bought properties that abut this protected greenway. These properties include: the 150-acre Wood property, the 14-acre Paddock property and the 96-acre Kelly Farm. Surrounding this 800+ acres of protected open space are hundreds of acres of more open space in Mendon, that if added to this acreage would establish a significant protected greenway

corridor. Mendon also has potential to protect other large tracts of land that abuts the towns of Uxbridge, Northbridge, Upton, and Hopedale.

B. History of the Community

Very Early History – Mid to Late 17th Century

Mendon became a town on May 15, 1667 five years after a sixty-four square mile tract had been purchased from Indians. One of the early attacks of King Philip's War took place in Mendon on July of 1675, and by winter, a second attack left the young town sacked and burned. Both attacks were by Nipmuc Indians. Upon King Philip's (a Native American) death the following year, the Nipmuc Indians fled to join other tribes in New York and Canada, leaving only a trace of its population. By 1680, twenty families had returned to Mendon.

18th Century

One of Mendon's chief claims to fame is her "mother town" status. Mendon's bigness became a handicap as the settlers began spreading out from the center to form new villages on the Blackstone, Mumford, Mill, Charles and West rivers. Abundant waterpower in these new settlements was soon put to use for grist and saw mills.

Mendon experienced reluctant motherhood several times, grudgingly yielding approximately forty-six square miles to eight offspring towns. This resulted in the incorporation of Uxbridge in 1727, Bellingham in 1719, Upton in 1735, Milford in 1780 and Blackstone in 1845. These are the children of "Mother Mendon." Mendon also has 3 grandchildren. Northbridge broke off from Uxbridge, Hopedale from Milford and Millville from Blackstone. Being surrounded by these intensely industrialized towns forced Mendon to become an agricultural town and became a regional food producer.

Mendon started growing from within; new farms, new roads, new schools, new and larger meetinghouses. As the eighteenth century came to a close, the Town of Mendon was completely settled in a pattern of farms spiraling in all directions from the center. Population was around 2000, even with the loss of Milford. Mendon Center was not a nucleated community; it was little more than the meetinghouse site of a network of dispersed farms. This would all change shortly after the turn of the century.

19th Century

The 19th century would bring the best and the worst of times to Mendon. The early decades of this century were the years where Mendon reached a peak in population, its widest range of activities, its greatest prosperity, and the fullest extent of architectural development. The significance of Mendon's historic district was established in this period, particularly since whatever Colonial-era buildings remained were replaced.

Spirits were high as Mendon enjoyed the early fruits of the industrial economy. For a short time, the town rivaled Worcester in this regard. Architectural development abounded; the Second Unitarian Church on Maple Street, large lavish houses along Hastings Street and the numerous smaller dwellings of Mendon's growing middle class. Mendon's plan was a significant representation (and is still to this day), of the New England village or town center as it developed in this Federal Period.

The center grew significantly in size and stature. The early introduction of water-powered machinery for the processing of wool and the weaving of fabric in the Blackstone Valley put the Mendon villages of Blackstone and Millville on the map. Textile manufacturing enterprises multiplied. Labor forces grew rapidly and financial investment, banking and real estate speculation brought new personalities and venture capital into town. Well-established farms prospered as improved transportation, notably the Blackstone Canal (1828), opened up new markets. A gradual shift was made from the traditional farming practices of the eighteenth century, which heavily favored beef production, to dairy and orchard products. Mendon center acquired the characteristics of a nucleated New England village.

During the mid-1800's, Mendon was grappling with the controversial issue of Blackstone's separation. Having rejected requests for years, Mendon's leaders finally relented and the Town of Blackstone (which at the time included Millville) was erected in 1845. Because of the tremendous economic development in the industrial villages along the Blackstone River, the loss of Blackstone had repercussions more serious than earlier separations from Mother Mendon. The town's personal and real estate valuation plummeted. Blackstone comprised nearly 60% of the town's real estate value and over 70% of its personal estate. Positioned in the center of three prospering industrial towns: Uxbridge, Milford and Blackstone, Mendon was reduced to a secondary status between these neighboring towns, where it remained until it became fashionable to live in the country many, many years later.

If not a thriving commercial center, Mendon was still a viable rural town. Farming and small-scale boot and shoe making flourished. The larger boot factories were located in Albeeville on the Mill River, but numerous small shops appeared in the center. This work continued for about thirty years, between 1845 and 1875. One of the most notable factories was W.H. Comstock's shop, located behind his families' distinctive Italianate residence on the northwesterly corner of Main and Maple streets. There is a significant gap in the architectural catalog of the center for the last half of the nineteenth century and it coincides with this period when Mendon reverted to being an isolated rural frontier once more.

When the railroads bypassed Mendon, going through Uxbridge and Milford instead, the town was hurt by the withdrawal of the shoe shops, but was helped travel-wise. People could take a stage to Milford or Uxbridge and then the train to Boston, Worcester or Providence.

20th Century

The twentieth century opened with prospects for the center's economy substantially improved. The town had now staked its future on being a rural retreat for both tourists and new residents. The town with its wonderful natural beauty, its great elevation, its cool and healthy atmosphere, and its beautiful lake, would soon be a noted summer resort and numbers of valuable and wealthy citizens whose places of business were elsewhere, would soon reside in Mendon.

On December 20, 1901, the Milford and Uxbridge Trolley Line opened, following a route that was constructed through Mendon. There was "enthusiasm everywhere". The trolley company built a park on Nipmuc Lake and Mendon became even more of a recreational town for working families working in surrounding towns. The trolley also made it possible for people to live in

rural Mendon and work in one of the neighboring urban towns. The town's image and self-confidence improved throughout the century.

In the great house-building frenzy that followed the Second World War, Mendon's housing stock was noticeably expanded, although not in any planned or systematic manner. Greater development occurred in the rural portions of the town and represent the continued, gradual growth of Mendon as a bedroom community.

21st Century

Mendon has experienced a greater impact from the sprawling Boston metropolis. Many of the historic farms surrounding the center have been the targets of dense housing subdivisions. Ironically, the historic farms situated in and about the center have made the best sites for housing. Thus, the center is becoming hemmed in with suburban housing while much of the hard scrapple parts of the town remain less intensively developed. Surviving farms in the center face the constant threat of development, which would have an adverse effect on the historic rural setting of the center. The center currently has weathered this housing explosion and remains remarkably intact to its nineteenth-century fabric. Still, Mendon Center has emerged from the twentieth century with its relics and monuments to its Colonial past, its distinctive Federal Period buildings and plan, and the improvements and scars of the ensuing 150 years of maturation well in place. Mendon remains a spectacular link to the past. Its residents realize this, calling it "Mendon Gold."

In recent years, the Mennonite religious community has found the Town of Mendon attractive because of the agricultural history. Many members of the Mennonite community are settling here and buying or renting large tracts of land to farm on. They might be a key group to carry on the tradition of Mendon's agricultural role in the region.

C. Population Characteristics

Mendon's population grew at a rapid pace through the 1980's and 1990's and this rapid rate of population growth has continued through 2004. The Census population for 2000 was 5,286. The Town Clerk's Office reports a population of 6,365 for the year 2004; this represents a 20% growth over 4 years, or 5% each year. Of this population 7% are under the age of 5, and 1,307 or 21% are school age children between the ages of 4 -18. The growth in the number of school-aged children is reflected in the increased usage of the town's recreational facilities and playing fields.

Demographic information for Mendon shows that Mendon is one of the fastest growing towns in the area. A study by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council estimated population increases for local towns. They compared Mendon's population from the year 2000, which was 5286, and Mendon's projected population in 2030, which was calculated at 9,300. The results were a 75.94% increase in Mendon's population from the year 2000 to the year 2030! This is very high compared to towns that abut Mendon; examples include: Hopedale a 12.63% increase, Bellingham an 8.67% increase, Blackstone an 11.90% increase and Uxbridge a 37.15% increase. The other abutting town that had a startling increase was Upton, with a 73.70% increase. Mendon and Upton are in a regional school district, so these population increases will have massive effects on the regional school system. This increase will also drastically affect the demand on town services. Mendon will need to make accommodations for passive and active

recreation for the growing numbers of town residents. Open space will need to be preserved before most of it becomes gobbled up by development.

Mendon's population density is still one of the lowest in the area. In 2004 there were approximately 352 people per square mile in Mendon. With the projections by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, the density could reach 513 people per square mile in the year 2030. This density is one of the lowest in the region. For comparison, population densities in surrounding towns in the year 2004 follow: Milford 1,812, Hopedale 1,154, Bellingham 826, Blackstone 803, Northbridge 761, Uxbridge 381 and Douglas 191.

The median income for the Worcester County area as of 2003 was \$74,2000, making an affordable homeowner unit priced at \$375,123 or less (this is from the Boston Metropolitan Statistical Area, of which Mendon is a part). Mendon's has 1.6% affordable housing officially certified with the State. However, two additional projects, Cobbler's Knoll and Grist Mill Village, which include 34 affordable housing units, approved by the Town, will increase Mendon's affordable housing to 3%. Mendon has a ways to go to reach the 10% affordable housing, but the Town is working to diversify its housing stock.

An economic analysis based on employer data obtained in March 2004 for the Mendon's Community Development Plan shows 21 companies with in the Town of Mendon, employing 485 individuals with a total combined annual sales volume of \$61,263,000. The percentage breakdown of these businesses as a whole, according to sales volume included: 42% manufacturing, 35% construction, 15% wholesale trade, 5% finance/insurance/real estate, 2% service and 1% retail.

Mendon's vision for the future is to have the economic activities contribute positively to the town's tax base, without dominating the Town. Low impact development with minimal infrastructure expansion is the current employment trend for the residential nature of Mendon's community.

D. Growth and Development Patterns

1. Patterns and trends

Mendon has grown from its agricultural beginnings to a rural, residential community in recent years. It is economics that pushed out the farms. The real estate market has been more profitable. Over the years, the productive farming land and open space have been developed. In 2005, housing lots were selling for \$250,000. With the land value for housing so high, it has made farming financially unfeasible. Several of the farms were passed down to children who did not want to continue in farming and moved away. In several situations the heirs wanted the cash and not the land. In other situations, families were land rich and cash poor and needed to sell the land to get the cash to pay the off estate taxes. Land is a valuable commodity in Mendon.

There are approximately three working farms in Mendon and several farmsteads on which people live, but do not derive their income. Many of these farms are under Chapter 61A, giving the Town of Mendon the right-of-first-refusal to buy these properties. This gives the Town the opportunity to preserve these farms.

In 1980 to 1990 the number of households increased from 1,036 to 1,362 or a 31.5% increase in those ten years. In 2005 there were 2220 households. The town has developed mostly through single-family lots and subdivisions during that time and the trend continues in that direction.

2. Infrastructure

Private wells and private septic systems serve most of Mendon. There are a few residential areas bordering the Town of Hopedale, along Route 16 and Route 140 that use municipal water from either Hopedale or the Milford Water Company. Because Mendon relies on the private wells and septic systems this does limit the land development to some extent, a single-family lot has to be 60,000-sq. ft. of upland. It also makes it more of a challenge to the Town to diversify the tax base, as businesses are not as eager to look at Mendon. This will be a challenge for the town to look at and decide what would be best for the town's future.

There are no major transportation facilities in Mendon. The closest mass transit station is the Franklin MBTA line, a 15-minute ride from the center of Mendon. The closest major route is Route 495. This is about a 10-minute drive from the center of Mendon. There are no plans for transportation facilities to be built in Mendon.

Although there are not mass transit facilities or major highways in Mendon, it is a town that people drive through to get to work or travel elsewhere. A study requested by the Town in 2005 found that on Route 16 an average of approximately 15,000 cars traveled on it per day. The traffic study also showed that 13,600 cars travel on Main Street per day and 15,800 on Hartford Avenue East. The wear and tear of traffic could create a high cost to Mendon taxpayers when Town's budget goes to pay for the maintenance and reconstruction of roads in Mendon because of the heavily traveled roads.

3. Long-term development patterns

Currently Mendon's growth comes from single-family lot development and subdivisions.

Most of the Town is zoned residential except along Route 140 and Route 16 that have a 200-foot setback for business development, with only 26.8 acres of land in the business district that is developable. See **Required Map 1** on the next page. On the following page is a Central MA Regional Planning Commission's **Build-Out Map** for Mendon showing how many more buildable acres there are available in Mendon. As seen on the map, there are still large areas that could be turned into sprawling subdivisions. In the residentially zoned areas, there is over 7000 acres of developable land. This translates to 3581 buildable house lots. Mendon needs to plan so that land can be preserved in the process of building new homes.

Required Map 1 – Zoning Map

Build-Out Map

Another pattern is the development of the ANR (approval not required) lots. Houses are being built along many roadsides in Mendon. The realtors in Mendon indicate that house lots in Mendon are scarce and therefore a lucrative commodity. This has lead many landowners to sell the ANR lots. Hopefully, the land reforms proposed under the Massachusetts Land Use Reform Act will be enacted and help give the towns more control on the growth in their towns and eliminate the negative effects of outdated laws that allow the ANR lots.

The results from the "Open Space and Recreation Plan Survey" show support for land preservation, for both conservation and recreational use. With the growth in single-family homes in the last ten years there has been an increase demand on the town recreational facilities, again the results of the survey show a need and support for more ball fields and other improvements to these areas. There were many comments on the survey showing a strong desire to keep Mendon a small rural community and support to preserve land as open space.

Currently the business district is along the two main roads in Mendon, Route 16 from the Hopedale town line to the Uxbridge town line and along Route 140 from Bellingham to Hopedale. For long term development the town needs to study the business zoning and perhaps make some carefully thought out changes to encourage business development in the future so the town can diversify the tax base.

Another area of zoning concern for the future is with the village center. This village center is of historical significance, as stated before; it is one of the best-preserved Federal Greek Revival hilltop centers in the state. Yet under current zoning it is not protected to ensure the village characteristics remain in the way it might become developed. In 2003, the village center was accepted by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This designation does not impose restrictions on the buildings in the area, but provides recognition and assists in preserving our nation's heritage.

Well more than 80% of Mendon is designated as having either core habitat or supporting natural landscapes as defined by the MA State's BioMap (see Required Map 6 on the page following page 38). Roads that cut across wildlife habitats disrupt migration patterns. Houses with large lawns uproot the native plants that feed the native animals and birds. Lawns treated with pesticides and herbicides can be poisonous to wildlife. Development in Mendon could have a detrimental effect on the wildlife if development is not planned carefully, residents are not educated on how to live alongside of wildlife habitats and open space is not preserved. The Town of Mendon has a commitment to its rural landscape and the preservation of open space.

Section 4 - Environmental Inventory and Analysis

A. Geology, Soils and Topography

Bedrock geology has been mapped for the entire State of Massachusetts by the United States Geologic Survey (USGS). Bedrock in the vicinity of Mendon consists of the Milford Granite, Pongansett Gneiss and undivided quartzite, schist, phyllite, marble and metavolcanic rocks. Limited information on surficial geology has been mapped by the Massachusetts Geographic Information System (MassGIS). This information identifies the majority of Mendon as being covered by till with limited sand and gravel and alluvium deposits centered around Muddy Brook, along the northeastern town border as illustrated in Required Map 2.

The topography of Mendon is characterized by rolling hills and fields. Most of the land exists at elevations of between 200 to 400 feet above mean sea level (amsl). Ground surface elevations generally decrease from northwest to southeast. A maximum ground surface elevation of approximately 595 feet amsl exists in the northwestern portion of town at Miscoe Hill. Muddy Brook, located in the northeast part of town is situated within a relatively narrow northwest-southeast trending drainage basin. This basin mimics that of the Mill River located just to the east. The western portion of town is drained to the west by Meadow Brook and Rocky Meadow Brook. These features generally have flatter sub-drainage basins with more extensive wetlands.

Additional detail on soils within Mendon are provided in the Interim Soils Report for Southern Worcester County. Soils present within Mendon consist of fine sandy loams and mucks. The Chatfield-Hollis complex covers much of the southwestern portion of town. This classification identifies areas where bedrock has been found to be present at depths of 4 feet or less below ground surface. This particular complex is also characterized by steep land slopes (15% to 35%). Areas with slopes of this magnitude may pose significant limitations to development. The shallow depth to bedrock and steep slopes make it impractical to use these areas for cemetery or active recreational purposes.

Several areas of Mendon are covered by soils identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as “Prime Farmland” including soils from the Merrimac, Scituate, Montauk and Canton series. These areas comprise approximately 20% of the town. The majority of these areas are centered along Providence Road and North Avenue, and include some of the most significant scenic views which define the character of the town. These areas are very attractive for residential development, which would result in the obstruction of these scenic views, and change the rural, agricultural appearance of the town.

B. Landscape Character

As a town formerly focused on farming as its main economic interest, Mendon has preserved much of its open fields and forests while neighboring communities have seen significant residential and commercial development over the past several years. This has allowed Mendon to maintain a landscape characterized by open fields, forests, and wetlands reminiscent of old-time New England communities. Particular areas of interest (shown on Required Map 3)

Required Map 2 – Soil and Geologic Features Map

Required Map 3 – Unique Features Map

within the Town of Mendon include Lake Nipmuc, scenic views such as that along North Avenue and Providence Road and large areas of open space located throughout the Town. Lake Nipmuc is a surface water body covering approximately 85 acres located in the central-western portion of town. Lake Nipmuc currently supports activities such as boating, swimming, and fishing. The Mendon Town Beach is located off of Taft Avenue, along the lake's eastern shoreline. The lake also provides a scenic backdrop enjoyed by both commercial establishments and nearby residents.

Scenic views, such as that provided by the dairy farm located along North Avenue, are among the main attractions which draw people to towns like Mendon. Adjacent to the road, the rock walls and rolling fields of the dairy farm are a reminder of the farming history of Mendon. The open fields allow residents and travelers along North Avenue an unobstructed view of the valley through which Muddy Brook flows.

In the southern part of Mendon there is an extensive property which consists of large open fields and old stone walls mixed with wooded areas which adds to the rural, agricultural character of Mendon. This property overlies a sand and gravel deposit which may have the potential to serve as a high yield aquifer. Development of this area may result in degradation of the quality of the water within this aquifer due to the presence of septic systems, application of fertilizers, etc.

New development conducted in any of these areas of town could result in detrimental effects to the environment and the overall character of the Town of Mendon. Development within the watershed of Lake Nipmuc could result in additional surface water runoff and erosion of soils into the lake which could significantly alter the water quality of the lake. Also, additional loading of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus from the application of fertilizers and the presence of septic systems and pets, may act to deplete the dissolved oxygen in the lake below levels capable of supporting aquatic life. This may also act to significantly increase the density of vegetation within the lake creating problems with respect to recreational uses of the lake as well as altering the habitat currently provided by the lake.

Construction of new houses or other facilities over or in the vicinity of Mendon's open fields and forests will act to replace Mendon's current rural character with that of a fully developed residential, commercial or industrial area similar to other small cities located in southern Massachusetts.

C. Water Resources

1. Watersheds

Most of Mendon is located within the watershed of the Blackstone River. A small portion of the town, which lies east of Route 140 falls within the Charles River Watershed. The Blackstone River Watershed Association (BRWA) is involved in a number of initiatives aimed at preserving and improving the overall conditions of the watershed and the water quality within the Blackstone River and its tributaries. These efforts include programs to control invasive species within the watershed, improve access to the River for appropriate recreational purposes, quantify

flow contribution of various tributaries near the headwaters, and monitor water quality within the River and its tributaries. The water quality monitoring program includes collection of water samples on a monthly basis between the months of April through November. One sample location is located at the southern end of Mendon, within the Mill River as it flows beyond Mendon's southern border. Available results showed the Mill River sample to be of excellent quality with respect to temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen for almost every sample. Turbidity and nitrate were generally found to be in "good" to "excellent" condition. Orthophosphate was found to be "poor" to "good". On the overall watershed report card, this area was rated as "excellent" in aesthetics, "good" for chemical concentrations, and "fair" for nutrients.

The Charles River Watershed Association also is involved in a number of initiatives throughout the Charles River Watershed. However, as such a limited area of Mendon is located within the Charles River Watershed, these efforts do not specifically address Mendon. The reach of the Charles River located within Mendon is noted to exceed the boating standard based on data obtained from a nearby sampling location located in Bellingham.

2. Surface Water

Surface water resources within the Town of Mendon are presented on Required Map 4. The most significant surface water body, for recreational uses, located within the Town of Mendon is Lake Nipmuc which is drained by Meadow Brook. Lake Nipmuc has not received a surface water classification from the State of Massachusetts. However, based on its current uses (recreation) it would be expected that the lake would be designated as a Class B water body. This classification identifies bodies of water which are suitable as habitats for fish and other aquatic life and wildlife. Class B waters are also suitable for swimming, wading, water skiing, fishing and boating.

3. Aquifer Recharge Areas

The only areas of aquifer recharge mapped in the Town of Mendon are the Zones of Contribution illustrated in Required Map No. 4. With the exception of the Talbot Farm area and a number of residences along Route 16 in the eastern portion of town, drinking water is obtained through private wells. The majority of these wells draw water from fractures within bedrock. Due to the fact that information regarding the orientation, etc. of these fractures is not currently available, identification and protection of any associated recharge areas is not possible at this time. This data gap should be addressed in the future to allow the Town of Mendon to take appropriate measures to protect the drinking water resources being utilized by most of its residents.

4. Flood Hazard Areas

Flood plains in Mendon have been mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Areas identified as Zone A flood areas (100-year flood zones) are limited to the immediate areas surrounding the larger surface water bodies in town. These areas include Lake Nipmuc and the lower portions of the Mill River as well as the wetland area associated with Long Meadow, in the northwest portion of town. Zone B flood areas (500-year flood zones) present in town are again limited to the immediate areas of smaller surface water bodies. Particularly, Zone B areas have been identified along Muddy and Spring Brooks as well as other scattered wetlands in town.

Required Map 4 – Water Resources Map

5. Wetlands

Much of Mendon is covered by scattered, small forested and non-forested wetland areas, based on a review of the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) maps, published by the U.S. Department of the Interior. The State of Massachusetts has yet to map wetlands in the area of Mendon according a representative from the Wetlands Conservancy Program.

Efforts to map wetlands in the area are being undertaken by the State. Other surface water bodies in town include Muddy and Spring Brooks, which combine before discharging to the Mill River in the southeastern portion of town. The Mill River is classified by the State of Massachusetts as a Class B water body.

D. Vegetation

Vegetation present in the Town of Mendon is generally typical of the surrounding vicinity. Tree species include pines, elm, maples, oak, birch, etc. The majority of town is forested. Extensive areas of forested lands such as that along Northbridge Road and in the southeast portion of town are used by area hunters. These same areas could be utilized for hiking or other passive recreation activities during certain times of the year.

The climbing fern, which is found in Mendon, is listed as a species of special concern by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program. This plant grows in pine-oak-maple wooded areas with open understory, moist thickets and stream margins. The climbing fern prefers sandy, acidic soils, rich in humus but nutrient poor. Although populations of the climbing fern are abundant where they are found, areas where the fern is found are rare and localized.

E. Fisheries and Wildlife

Wildlife present within the Town of Mendon include several species typically observed in rural Massachusetts communities. These include: deer, pileated woodpeckers, fishers, woodcock, kestrels, bobolinks, eastern meadow larks, racoons, pheasants, partridges, skunks, wild turkeys and a variety of fish species. Most of these species are severely impacted by residential and/or commercial development. Such development acts to destroy or fragmentize the areas capable of supporting the habitat requirements. If species such as deer are not allowed proper habitat environments, as well as corridors through which to move from one area to the next, the population will quickly deplete the available food supply. Construction of roads and development of wooded areas act to reduce the available habitat for these species. Also, available habitats which are not destroyed by development may become inaccessible to the species population.

In addition to the species mentioned above, the Town of Mendon also encompasses habitats supporting species identified by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife as being threatened species or species of special concern. **Table 1** provides a summary of these species, their respective habitat requirements and some recommendations for management of each species environment to provide adequate protection of their habitats. This information was obtained through the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program.

Table 1

F. Scenic Resources and Unique Environments

Mendon's scenic resources include the areas previously mentioned as well as other areas. Old New England open fields and large rock walls are present on farms located along Quisett Road in the south-central part of town and Providence Road near the center of town. Streets such as Thayer Road and Miscoe Road have been designated as scenic roads due to their natural, wooded surroundings.

Over 250 buildings within Mendon have been identified as architecturally significant. These buildings are spread throughout the town. Historic districts have been established which include the Mendon Village and Lake Nipmuc. These districts are areas which contain a relatively high density of historic structures or features. Required Map 3 illustrates Mendon's historic districts and scenic roads.

G. Environmental Challenges

Table 2 summarizes oil and hazardous waste releases reported within the Town of Mendon which are presently listed with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MADEP). These sites have experienced releases of materials which exceeded the reporting threshold quantity as defined by MADEP for each contaminant.

In addition to these sites, another area of concern could be the former town landfill located in the eastern portion of the town. The landfill stopped receiving wastes and was formally closed in accordance with State requirements in the early 1980's. The landfill is situated near the point at which the Spring and Muddy Brooks discharge to the Mill River. The landfill also exists on top of a sand and gravel deposit which has the potential to serve as a high-yield aquifer. Although not currently under investigation by a regulatory agency, this landfill by its nature has the potential to generate leachate, containing hazardous contaminants, into the environment. Groundwater monitoring wells around the landfill were reportedly monitored for water quality parameters for a period of time. Based on a discussion with an individual familiar with the landfill, no significant contamination was detected.

A potentially significant environmental problem currently developing in the vicinity of Mendon is the construction of power plants in neighboring communities. These facilities may act to diminish the regional air quality as well as stress available water resources in the area. As a result, the importance of protecting currently available water and other environmental resources is all the more critical.

Table 2

Section 5 – Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

One of the strongest indications on the survey was that town residents want to preserve open space. 92% of the respondents said that preserving land in Mendon over the next five years should be a high priority for the Town. There are several reasons that preserving open space is important.

- One, is that Mendon has a high percentage of environmental significant land. Much of the land in Mendon that has not been built on is Core Habitat or Supporting Natural Landscapes as designated on the BioMap by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. As much of this land as possible needs to be protected to preserve this wildlife habitat.
- Two, is that numerous studies show that it is more cost effective for a town to purchase open space than to have residential housing built on the land. Homeowners require more town services. In Mendon, the new houses that are being built typically have 3-5 bedrooms and the new residents are bringing in more children. In 1999, the Land Use Committee calculated that over \$4000 was lost each year per typical household with two children because of the town services required, especially the cost to educate the children. The taxes paid by these households do not cover the cost of services required by the household.
- Three, is that Mendon's history is based on its rural agricultural past.
- Four, is that the open space provides for healthy recreational activities including hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, camping and hunting. Most of the people who live in Mendon live in Mendon because of its open spaces.

A. Private Parcels

The private parcels of special interest are listed on the **Land Matrix Chart** and on **Required Map 5** following *Section 5*. Mendon has a significant amount of land under Chapter 61, 61A and 61B: 2,456 acres in total. This land is privately owned and only under short-term protection, however the Town has taken advantage of their right-of-first-refusal powers to protect three noteworthy properties since the last OSRP. Two of the properties, the 96-acre Kelly Farm and the 14-acre Paddock property helped the Town complete a contiguous tract of 800 acres of protected open space. The third piece of Chapter 61A land the Town purchased was the 78-acre Fino property. The Town used Community Preservation Funds to purchase a 24-acre portion of the Fino property to save as open space. This parcel connects to hundreds of acres of unprotected open space, has a river running through it and contains an open field that is one of the first landscapes seen when driving into Mendon.

Purchasing land is one method of preservation, however it can be costly. The Land Use Committee is working to utilize several other methods. Conservation restrictions are a

good method to preserve open space for less money. With CR's, the landowner can continue to live on the land, but the Town buys the development rights to permanently preserve the land. Another method is finding conservation buyers. This can be a very cost effective way to preserve land. In this case an owner is found to buy a large tract of land, but only builds on a small portion of the property and permanently preserves the rest of the property. Another important aspect is to work with large landowners with philanthropic intent to accept donations of land. Another method is partial development to recoup some of the purchase costs. The Land Use Committee has a strong network of contacts with land trusts, estate and tax lawyers, state and local officials as well as other experts to learn about new methods of land preservation, grant availability and current legislation.

Land Matrix Chart

Required Map 5 – Inventory of Land

The Town also lost a little more than 100 acres of their land under Chapter 61. The Town cannot afford to protect all Chapter 61 land and therefore, does not always exercise its right-of-first-refusal and try to buy every property that comes up for sale. The Land Use Committee through the information in the OSRP has set priorities as to what land is most valuable to the Town and focuses on preserving these properties. Since the Committee has used this well thought out tactic, almost every vote to preserve land in the last five years has passed through with unanimous approval of the voters (or very close to unanimous). The Community Preservation Act vote was the only vote that was controversial, but in the end passed overwhelmingly at the ballot.

There are many landowners with large properties that would be valuable as public open space or recreation areas. Mendon has forested areas, open fields from the old farms and many wetlands that create a beautiful, diverse and healthy habitat for wildlife and humans. Much of Mendon's land is designated as *Core Habitat and Supporting Natural Landscape* as designated by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program's BioMap. The Land Use Committee in Mendon monitors these ecologically rich lands for future preservation and watches for properties that are practically located for sports fields. The Land Use Committee is currently working with several landowners to employ cost effective land preservation strategies, such as conservation restrictions and outright land donations.

B. Public and Non-Profit Parcels

The public parcels are also noted on the **Matrix** and on **Required Map 5**. As mentioned above, several of the private parcels have become public. Another private parcel, the 150-acre town-owned Wood property, was also purchased with the help of the Metacomet Land Trust, a private donor and the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. This property, along with the town-owned Kelly and town-owned Paddock properties mentioned above, also helped to complete an 800-acre tract of contiguous, protected open space. On this tract of land the Land Use Committee is working with the Bay State Trail

Riders Association who is clearing cart paths to develop a trail system on these properties.

The Land Use Committee has also worked with a forester to develop forest stewardship plans for the Town owned properties. Mendon Boy Scout Troop 44 camped several times on the Town-owned Kelly Farm property. After the stewardship plan was developed, the Boy Scouts worked with the forester to blaze the borders of the property and perform wildlife cutting of trees to create nesting sites for birds and mammals.

With the many new families with young children, the need for public recreation areas and sports teams continues to increase. The Park Commissioners have utilized land that the Town already owned and has either upgraded facilities or developed town-owned land. An example of this is the Grover Soccer Field that was constructed in a subdivision on an empty town-owned lot that the developer had given the Town.

Section 6 – Community Vision

A. Description of Process

Surveys were mailed to every household, post office box and business in Mendon, with approximately 2200 possible respondents. The surveys were mailed as an insert in the October 2005 issue of the Mendon-Upton Town Crier to assure that every resident received a copy of the survey. There were 196 completed and returned surveys, a 9% response rate. We also mailed the survey to each town board. The “check-off” responses were very helpful in determining the community goals and the written comments gave the committee a flavor for the community sentiment.

Since this has been an ongoing process of updating the OSRP, the Land Use Committee has been reaching out to the public and the town committees and boards for the past five years. Each year a public hearing was held on the Five Year Action Plan, memos were sent to each town board and committee and the Five Year Action Plan was presented at each of the past five Mendon Annual town Meetings and unanimously approved. For the past five years, the OSRP has been made available to the public at the Taft Public Library and the Town Hall.

After combining the survey information, what the Town has learned in the past five years with land acquisition and recreational facilities development, five years of public hearings on the five year goals, as well as the mapping information, the Land Use Committee developed goals, objectives and a five-year action plan.

B. Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals

Mendon still has productive farmlands, scenic vistas, wildlife corridors and an overall country “feel.” It possesses the qualities of a hilltop farm community with its open fields, historical buildings and 300-yearold cemeteries. However, the residential population is growing rapidly. Mendon’s historic and natural beauty has drawn many people to Mendon increasing the need to protect the last gems of open space.

Land conservation and protection of natural resources was a high priority with 84% of the respondents of the OSRP Survey wanting the Town to spend money to protect conservation land. Several people also commented wanting to protect open space in the most cost-effective way possible, indicating that the land Use Committee and the Town of Mendon need to look for creative and collaborative ways to preserve land.

Improvement and the development of more passive and active recreation areas was also a strong interest to people. 66% of the respondents wanted the Town to spend money on recreational purposes. The recreational facilities need improving, upgrading and expanding to meet the needs of Mendon’s growing community.

Growth and development in Mendon are inevitable; however the Town of Mendon needs to continue to be an active player in the process. Growth needs to be planned long range so that land preservation becomes a reality, and not an afterthought that becomes a regret over land not protected. Recreational needs need to be met without impacting the natural resources in a negative manner.

Section 7 – Analysis of Needs

A. Summary of Resource Protection Needs

The pressure for development in Mendon is ever growing. Below are several sources of data to support this point.

- With the connection of the Mass. Pike and Route 146 and the suburbs outside of Boston reaching their build-out limits, Mendon becomes more desirable for development each day.
- Channel Five's Chronicle on October 3, 2005 highlighted Mendon as the new growth area because of its open land and its affordable housing as compared to the towns closer to Boston.
- Sprawl is a serious issue in Mendon. In the Mass Audubon's November 2003 report, Losing Ground: At What Cost, Mendon was listed as 10th out of the 351 towns and cities in Massachusetts in being designated as a *Sprawl Hot Spot*. This designation as a sprawl hot spot confirms what the Mendon townspeople have been witnessing.
- The average house lot price has jumped from approximately \$90,000 in 2000 to \$250,000 in 2005. The houses, lawns and lots are getting bigger and adding to the destruction of wildlife habitats and making it more expensive to protect these habitats.
- The 2000 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for Massachusetts also refers to the "suburban growth explosion," of which Mendon is feeling the pressure. It also states that the preservation of open space and building of recreational facilities has not kept up with the need of the growing population.

The Massachusetts's BioMap has indicated the valuable wildlife habitats that exist in Mendon. The Land Use Committee worked with MassGIS to get parcel lines for Mendon digitized so the BioMap could be layered with the Town parcel lines. What was revealed was that many large contiguous parcels of open space that are currently privately owned contain large areas *Core Habitat and Supporting Natural Landscape* as designated by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program's BioMap.

Data supports the need to protect land and land conservation is a high interest to Mendon residents according to the OSRP Survey results (Appendix B), town meeting votes over the last five years and from the information collected from Mendon's town committees, boards and reports. Land conservation and protection of natural resources was a high priority with 84% of the OSRP Survey respondents wanting the Town to spend money to protect conservation land. Items that survey respondents thought should be a high priority for the Town of Mendon over the next five years included: 74% protection of water

resources, 71% protection of farms, 66% protection of conservation areas and 50% protection of wildlife habitats. All these statistics indicate the will of voters to protect land.

Massachusetts's BioMap shows that the beauty of Mendon's open space, which Mendon residents appreciate, also holds a critical mass of land that has high ecological value. Protecting large greenways of land will provide wildlife corridors, scenic beauty and protection of natural resources as well as areas that can be productive in agriculture. The Land Use Committee needs to continue to use the MassGIS mapping system to help guide the Town as to what privately owned land is worth buying for open space, wildlife corridors and potential trails.

There is increasing pressure to protect land that is getting more and more expensive. Since there are still many acres of open space to protect in Mendon, more funding for land preservation will need to be raised. This funding needs to be stretched and used efficiently, therefore, the Town of Mendon needs to continue to find opportunities to creatively preserve land that are not as costly as outright purchase of land.

B. Summary of Community's Needs

The Census population for 2000 was 5,286. The Town Clerk's Office reports a population of 6,143 for the year 2005; this represents a 20% growth over 4 years. 28% of the population is under the age of 18, the state median is 16%. As the Town's population has grown, especially the under 18 age group, the needs for recreational facilities have increased.

There is a need for more sports fields. Additional factors include that football and lacrosse have been added as popular sports and these new teams add to the pressure of needing more sports fields. Additionally, the increase of children playing baseball, softball and soccer from 2000-2005 has increased by 224 children. More sports fields and better utilization of fields are needed in Mendon.

The OSRP Survey indicated the need for recreational facilities. 66% of the OSRP Survey respondents wanted the Town to spend money on recreational purposes. Items that survey respondents thought should be a high priority for the Town of Mendon over the next five years included: 63% biking/hiking areas, 44% upgrading of the Town beach area and 39% land acquisition for active recreation. The Park Commissioners need to address the improvement and creation of new recreational facilities.

Mendon needs to develop a balance between recreation and open space. One issue that the Land Use Committee has been facing is the issue of motorized vehicles on trails. In the 800-acres of open space in the southwesterly part of Mendon, cart paths are being cleared only as loop trails and not connected to trails in abutting towns or to the power line easements. The reason is that there are ATV motorized vehicles that are on the power line easements and trails in abutting towns. Hooking into a statewide system of trails is very desirable, but currently Mendon does not have a plethora of ATVs on their trails. In

the abutting towns the ATV's are a hazard and a problem on their trails. Monitoring of the motorized vehicles on the trails is extremely difficult. This is an issue that the Town of Mendon has to carefully work through.

Special interest groups voiced concerns. The Cemetery Commissioners continue to alert the Selectmen to the fact that the space for burial is getting used up rapidly. Land that is appropriate has not become available in the past five years; however this issue needs to be addressed.

Not many people commented about more needs to accommodate the disabled, but the Park commissioners are aware that although Mendon has improved recreational facilities for the handicapped, more needs to be done as seen in the ADA Transition Plan.

C. Management Needs Potential Change of Use

Communication between town boards and committees is essential. There are several issues that the town boards need to work together on to avoid haphazard development. One feature of the Land Use Committee and the Community Preservation Committee that has been very effective over the last five years is that each of these committees is made up of representatives of other town committees. The Land Use Committee has representatives from the following town committees: Conservation Commission, Board of Selectman, Planning Board and two Members-at-Large. The Community Preservation Committee has representatives from the following town committees: Historical Commission, Planning Board, Mendon Housing Authority, Conservation Commission and a Member-at-Large. This overlapping of boards has greatly increased communication on various projects and should be continued. Other methods to enhance communication should be examined.

Open space subdivisions need to be investigated as a way to protect land at no cost to the Town. Over the past five years, 99 new homes have been built in subdivisions in Mendon. Most houses in Mendon are on two or more acres with the Town requiring an acre and a half of upland per house lot. These large lots and lawns create sprawl and destruction of wildlife habitats. Since Mendon needs to preserve land in an economical manner and since many subdivisions get built in Mendon, the Town needs to research the option of open space subdivisions. This allows builders, through a special permit, to build a house on less land and in return preserve the equal amount of land as open space preserved in perpetuity. Much land can be preserved at no cost to the town.

The Town of Mendon over the past five years has seen that the issue of affordable housing needs to be addressed. Since the last OSRP was compiled many changes have occurred in Mendon. One is that several Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit developments have been filed in Mendon. The pressure has wasted a lot of time of town boards trying to meet the developer's needs or fighting these projects. The Town needs to gain further control of its development, instead of developers who file Comprehensive Permits and then can bypass the town's zoning regulations. One positive move in this direction was by the Planning Board proposal for an Affordable Housing Overlay

District, which was voted into the Mendon Zoning Bylaws to encourage the development of affordable housing units. The Land Use Committee needs to look at various smaller pieces of town-owned land that might not have as much environmental value and consider their sale for affordable housing. A proactive stance needs to continue in this area.

Only 16% of the OSRP Survey respondents saw the need for affordable housing as a high priority. An education process also needs to take place so residents understand that affordable housing can be attractive, help prevent sprawl and can work in consort with land preservation as well as improve the diversity and quality of life in Mendon.

Most of the committees and boards are volunteer positions. On the OSRP Survey, 25 respondents gave their names to offer help with open space and recreation planning. This is very positive; however the town might need to consider a paid position, such as a Town Planner, to coordinate all the projects in Town.

Section 8 – Goal and Objectives

The 2000 Mendon Open Space and Recreation Plan Goals and Objectives were very well thought out and reflected the needs of the Town very accurately then, and now. Although, a great deal of time, effort and collaboration have gone into the updating of this 2005 OSRP, in the final analysis, the Goals and Objectives have not changed significantly from 2000 to 2005. Much of the efforts from 2000 OSRP need to be continued. The changes will be seen in the specifics of the Action Plan.

The goals and objectives are based on the demographic information collected in Section 3, the environmental analysis done in Section 4, the community goals developed in Section 6 and the analysis of needs in Section 7. This information was combined with the advice from what the town boards and committees have learned from past endeavors. We also referred to the BioMap information, MassGIS data, 2004 Community Development Plan, 2000 Mendon Open Space and Recreation Plan and all the information collected for this 2005 OSRP. The goals reflect the opinion of residents to protect open space, protect the natural resources and provide recreational facilities for all ages. Following are the goals and objectives.

1. GOAL: To protect critical parcels of land for conservation and passive recreation

OBJECTIVES:

- 1a. Determine where land preservation should be targeted taking into consideration potential for greenway corridors (contiguous land parcels) and other areas that are scenic or environmentally sensitive
- 1b. Evaluate level of protection for each parcel and identify most critical areas for protection
- 1c. Help to coordinate the exchange of information between town boards
- 1d. Investigate trail linkages to adjacent towns and trail potentials in Mendon, while Considering the impact on the current trails in Mendon
- 1e. Educate the public on the environmental and financial benefits of open space
- 1f. Collect information from residents to understand their needs and interests

2. GOAL: To provide active recreation areas to meet the needs of Mendon's growing population

OBJECTIVES:

- 2a. Determine what current facilities need upgrading and what new facilities are needed
- 2b. Increase the number of fields and facilities and make an efficient use of recreational assets
- 2c. Work with the various athletic clubs to coordinate projects
- 2d. Provide funding sources for ADA upgrades on Transition Plan

3. GOAL: To access funding and land protection strategies to protect or purchase land for open space or recreation

OBJECTIVES:

- 3a. Investigate possibility for state matching funds
- 3b. Build-up the funds in the Land Bank Trust account
- 3c. Collect data on potential use of deed restrictions, easements and other methods of land preservation that save taxpayer's money
- 3d. Locate land that the Town could possess for unpaid taxes
- 3d. Look into the possibility of open space subdivisions

4. GOAL: To protect the town's water resources (wetlands, ponds, aquifers etc.)

OBJECTIVES:

- 4a. Determine where Mendon's water resources are located
- 4b. Protect the areas where water is located

5. GOAL: To provide support to farmers who want to keep their land in agriculture and maintain productive farms

OBJECTIVES:

- 5a. Determine the needs of area farmers
- 5b. Coordinate conservation efforts to provide land for agriculture

6. GOAL: To help guide business and residential development to shape Mendon's growth, avoiding haphazard development

OBJECTIVES:

- 6a. Plan growth so that it works to maintain Mendon's rural character and country atmosphere
- 6b. Review zoning by-laws with regards to providing open space

7. GOAL: To provide cemetery space to meet future needs

OBJECTIVES:

- 7a. Locate appropriate and available land that meshes with the overall goals of cost-effective land preservation
- 7b. Determine how to fund purchase of the land

8. GOAL: To assist in the acquisition of land for the Town of Mendon's needs

OBJECTIVES:

- 8a. Be aware of town land needs
- 8b. Locate properties that may be appropriate for town use and will enhance maintaining Mendon's rural character

9. To work towards the goal of 10% affordable housing units for the Town of Mendon

OBJECTIVES:

- 9a. Look for opportunities to promote more affordable housing
- 9b. Look for funding to promote affordable housing

Section 9 – Five-Year Action Plan

1. GOAL: To protect critical parcels of land for conservation and passive recreation

OBJECTIVES:

- 1a. Determine where land preservation should be targeted taking into consideration potential for greenway corridors (contiguous land parcels) and other areas that are scenic or environmentally sensitive
- 1b. Permanently protect the parcels designated in 1a.
- 1c. Evaluate level of protection for each parcel and identify most critical areas for protection
- 1d. Help to coordinate the exchange of information between town boards
- 1e. Investigate trail linkages to adjacent towns and trail potentials in Mendon, while Considering the impact on the current trails in Mendon
- 1f. Educate the public on the environmental and financial benefits of open space
- 1g. Collect information from residents to understand their needs and interests

ACTIONS:

- 1a. Update digital GIS maps for Mendon
Responsible Party: Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers
YEARS: 2010-2013
- 1a. Give MassGIS information on Mendon's open space to keep the maps accurate
Responsible Party: Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers
YEARS: 2010-2013
- 1a. Define the greenway corridors on the new maps and identify other parcels that are of high priority for protection **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee
Potential Funding: volunteers
YEARS: 2010-2013
- 1b. When key parcels come up for sale try to purchase land or development rights, especially on land abutting the Meadow Brook Woods property and the Inman Hill Wildlife Conservation Area **Responsible Party:** Land Use and Community Preservation Committees **Potential Funding:** DCR matching grants, Div. of Fish & Wildlife Grants, Federal Grants, non-profit land protection organization funding and CPA funds **YEARS: 2010-2013**

- 1c. Evaluate level of protection needed for each parcel, especially using the BioMap, as well as other data **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers **YEARS: 2010-2013**
- 1d. Have each of the Land Use Committee and the Community Preservation Committee members stay in close communication with the various committees they represent (planning board, conservation commission, park commission, selectmen etc.) **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee and Community Preservation Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers **YEARS: 2010-2013**
- 1d. Stay in close communication with the Assistant Assessor and the Selectmen to monitor the Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B property for possible purchase when they come up for sale **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers **YEARS: 2010-2013**
- 1e. Develop a trail system in Mendon (with well designated signage), following the greenways designated on Map 5; work with neighboring towns, the Metacomet Land Trust and other groups (e.g. Bay State Trail Riders Association, the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission); work to accommodate the handicapped and senior citizens on a portion of the trails **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee/BSTRA/BSA **Potential Funding:** volunteers /BSTRA/BSA Eagle Scout project fundraising **YEARS: 2010-2013**
- 1f. Educate residents to the importance of saving open space through a series of newspaper articles, information sheets and meetings **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee, Community Preservation Committee and the Lake Nipmuc Association **Potential Funding:** volunteers **YEARS: 2010-2011**
- 1f. Informally meet with large land owners letting them know the advantages of Chapter 61, 61A and 61B and other conservation techniques **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee and Community Preservation Committee **Potential Funding:** LUC Budget/volunteers **YEARS: 2010-2013**
- 1f. Update the goals, objectives and 5-year action plans for open space and recreation each year **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** LUC Budget/volunteers **YEARS: 2010 and 2012**
- 1g. Mail out a survey to all residents and town board members to reevaluate the current open space and recreation goals **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** LUC Budget/volunteers **YEAR: 2012**

2. GOAL: To provide active recreation areas to meet the needs of Mendon's growing population

OBJECTIVES:

- 2a. Determine what current facilities need upgrading and what new facilities are needed
- 2b. Increase the number of fields and facilities and make an efficient use of recreational assets
- 2c. Work with the various athletic clubs to coordinate projects
- 2d. Provide funding sources for ADA upgrades on Transition Plan

ACTIONS:

- 2a. Continue to evaluate old facilities and determine needs (i.e. athletic fields, beach area upgrade etc.) **Responsible Party:** Park Commissioners **Potential Funding:** volunteers **YEARS: 2010-2013**
- 2a. Finish handicap playground at the Town Beach. **Responsible Party:** Park Commissioners **Potential Funding:** Town Budget, grants, CPA Funds **YEAR: 2010**
- 2a. Complete the ADA Transition Plan suggestions **Responsible Party:** Park Commissioners **Potential Funding:** Town Budget, grants, CPA Funds **YEAR: 2011**
- 2b. Solicit funding for new recreational facilities **Responsible Party:** Park Commissioners **Potential Funding:** local businesses, CPA funding, grant and volunteers **YEARS: 2010-2013**
- 2c. Work with the Mendon-Upton Soccer Club and the Mendon Junior Baseball-Softball League **Responsible Party:** Park Commissioners **Potential Funding:** Volunteers **YEARS: 2010-2013**
- 2d. Secure funding at Town Meeting for ADA upgrades **Responsible Party:** Park Commissioners **Potential Funding:** town budget & grants **YEAR: 2011**

3. GOAL: To access funding and land protection strategies to protect or purchase land for open space or recreation

OBJECTIVES:

- 3a. Investigate possibility for state matching funds
- 3b. Build-up the funds in the CPA Open Space and Budgeted Reserve Accounts and the Mendon Land Bank
- 3c. Collect data on potential use of deed restrictions, easements and other methods of land preservation
- 3d. Locate land that the Town could possess for unpaid taxes
- 3d. Encourage the use of the Open Space Communities Bylaw
Responsible Party: Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers

ACTIONS:

- 3a. Review guidelines for the MA Dept. of Conservation and Recreation matching fund programs and other grant programs and where applicable apply for funds for appropriate open space or recreation projects **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee and Park Commissioners
Potential Funding: volunteers, grants and CPA funds **YEARS: 2010-2013**
- 3b. Look at town-owned properties and evaluate the possibilities of making income on the properties benignly (forestry, farm lease etc.) and then use the income for future purchase of open space **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee
Potential Funding: volunteers **YEARS: 2010-2013**
- 3b. Evaluate use of the CPA Funds and publicize the CPA funded projects to promote continued voter support of the CPA tax levy **Responsible Party:** Community Preservation Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers **YEARS: 2010-2013**
- 3c. Work with Metacomet Land Trust, National Heritage Corridor Commission, The Trustees of Reservations, area towns and other organizations to develop land protection strategies and promote regional projects **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers **YEARS: 2010-2013**
- 3d. Follow through the process to obtain land for the Town **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers/Town Counsel budget **YEARS: 2010-2013**
- 3d. Promote the use of the Open Space Communities Bylaw by working with the Planning Board and developers **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee **Funding Potential:** volunteers **YEARS: 2010-2013**

4. GOAL: To protect the town's water resources (wetlands, ponds, aquifers etc.)

OBJECTIVES:

- 4a. Determine where Mendon's water resources are located
- 4b. Protect the areas where water is located
- 4c. Remove non-native and invasive plants from waterways
- 4d. Prevent road runoff, farm waste and other toxins from entering water ways or wetlands

ACTIONS:

- 4a. Work with Selectmen and Planning Board to evaluate the Groundwater Protection District Bylaw
Responsible Party: Water Board &/or ad hoc Water Study Committee
Potential Funding: volunteers
YEAR: 2011
- 4b. Protect land parcels that are watershed areas or environmentally sensitive with regards to water protection **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee
Potential Funding: CPA Funds, bonds and grants
YEARS: 2010-2013
- 4c. Remove the seven acres of water chestnuts that are consuming the ten acre Inman Pond located on the Meadow Brook Woods Property that was purchased with a DCR LAND Grant and CPA funds
Responsible Party: Community Preservation Committee
Potential Funding: The Trustees of Reservations and CPA funds
YEAR: 2010
- 4d. Work with the Nipmuc Lake Association and the Conservation Commission to monitor and clean-up any areas where pollutants will damage the lake and watershed area, form a Meadow Brook Woods Association that will protect the Inman Pond and enforce the Non-Storm Water Discharge Bylaw
Responsible Party: Land Use Committee and Highway Department
Potential Funding: volunteers and land Use Committee Budget
YEAR: 2010

5. GOAL: To provide support to farmers who want to keep their land in agriculture and maintain productive farms

OBJECTIVES:

- 5a. Determine the needs of area farmers
- 5b. Coordinate conservation efforts to provide land for agriculture
- 5c. Lease land to farmers and agriculture groups

ACTIONS:

- 5a. Talk with area farmers to determine their needs **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers
YEARS: 2010-2013
- 5b. Investigate state and federal programs that may help area farmers
Responsible Party: Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers
And state and federal agricultural programs
YEARS: 2010-2013
- 5b. Work with farmers to put conservation restrictions on their land **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers
YEARS: 2010-2013
- 5c. Work with area farmers and 4-H groups to utilize open farm fields for crops or livestock **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers and state and federal agricultural programs
YEARS: 2010-2013

6. GOAL: To help guide business and residential development to shape Mendon's growth, avoiding haphazard development

OBJECTIVES:

- 6a. Plan growth so that it works to maintain Mendon's rural character and country atmosphere
- 6b. Review zoning by-laws with regards to providing open space

ACTIONS:

- 6a. Work with Selectmen on the town-owned Fino property to develop a plan for commercial, affordable housing and standard housing that will fit with Mendon's

character and generate income to repay the debt incurred to purchase the Fino property **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee/Selectmen **Potential Funding:** volunteers/funds from sale of property for commercial use

YEARS: 2010-2011

- 6a. Look actively for future possibilities to provide open space and income to the Town through land purchases **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers

YEARS: 2010-2013

- 6b. Support the Massachusetts Land Use Reform Act to upgrade the State's land use laws and if passed by the State legislature, work with the Mendon Planning Board to make changes in Mendon's local bylaws **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers

YEARS: 2010-2013

- 6b. Monitor use of the Demolition Delay Bylaw

Responsible Party: Historical Commission and Preservation Mendon **Potential Funding:** volunteers and CPA funds

YEARS: 2010-2013

- 6b. Develop a Historic Downtown Village to preserve the downtown and make it more pedestrian friendly

Responsible Party: Historical Commission and Preservation Mendon **Potential Funding:** volunteers, grants and CPA funds

YEARS: 2010-2013

7. GOAL: To provide cemetery space to meet future needs

OBJECTIVES:

- 7a. Locate appropriate and available land that meshes with the overall goals of cost-effective land preservation

- 7b. Determine how to fund purchase of the land

ACTIONS:

- 7a. Work with the Cemetery Commissioners to locate property appropriate for cemetery space **Responsible Party:** Selectmen **Potential Funding:** volunteers

YEAR: 2010-2013

- 7a. Finalize the location of cemetery space and make appropriate arrangements to make the space accessible **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee/ Selectmen/ Cemetery Commissioners **Potential Funding:** volunteers/grant/bonds

YEAR: 2010-2013

- 7a. Evaluate using a portion of the land for a memorial garden for cremated remains providing an alternative to burial and therefore preserving land
Responsible Party: Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers
YEAR: 2010-2013
- 7b. Encouraging the Cemetery Commissioners to investigate funding sources, donation possibilities, matching funds and other methods of purchase to keep the costs to a minimum **Responsible Party:** Cemetery Commissioners/Selectmen
Potential Funding: volunteers
YEAR: 2010-2013

8. GOAL: To assist in the acquisition of land for the Town of Mendon's needs

OBJECTIVES:

- 8a. Be aware of town land needs
- 8b. Locate properties that may be appropriate for town use and will enhance maintaining Mendon's rural character

ACTIONS:

- 8a. Communicate with the Selectmen to be up-to-date on the land use needs for the town **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee **Potential Funding:** volunteers
YEARS: 2010-2013
- 8b. Assist where needed to locate land to fill the needs of the Town of Mendon, (e.g. school buildings, fire station, new town hall, library, affordable housing, post office etc.), balancing these needs with maintaining Mendon's rural character and preserving open space designated as a high priority **Responsible Party:** Land Use Committee/Selectmen **Potential Funding:** volunteers
YEARS: 2010-2013

9. To work towards the goal of 10% affordable housing units for the Town of Mendon

OBJECTIVES:

- 9a. Look for opportunities to promote more affordable housing
- 9b. Look for funding to promote affordable housing

ACTIONS:

9a. When land comes up for sale evaluate the potential for affordable housing

Responsible Party: Land Use Committee/Mendon Housing Authority

Potential Funding: volunteers

YEARS: 2010-2013

9a. Look for opportunities to change the bylaws to accommodate the needs of affordable housing **Responsible Party:** Selectmen/ Mendon Housing

Authority **Potential Funding:** volunteers

YEARS: 2010-2013

9b. Maintain the CPA tax levy program and find projects to make the best use of the CPA affordable housing fund **Responsible Party:** Mendon Housing

Authority/ Community Preservation Committee **Potential Funding:**

Volunteers, grants and CPA funds

YEARS: 2010-2013

9b. Look for grants and matching fund programs to encourage affordable housing **Responsible Party:** Mendon Housing Authority/ Selectmen

Potential Funding: volunteers/ state and federal funds

YEARS: 2010-2013

9b. Tie in affordable housing project with other land acquisition programs for open space preservation or business development **Responsible Party:**

Mendon Housing Authority/ Community Preservation Committee/

Selectmen **Potential Funding:** volunteers/ state and federal funds

YEARS: 2010-2013

Required Map 6 indicates the areas of land that are of high priority for preservation if and when these parcels come up for sale.

Section 10 - Public Comments

See letters on following pages

Section 11 - References

BioMap Guiding Plan conservation for biodiversity in Massachusetts

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife/ Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

Census Reports of 2000 and 2005

Community Development Plan for Mendon

Central Mass regional Planning Board, Mullin and Associates Inc., Tighe & Bond Consulting Engineers and University of Massachusetts at Amherst

MassGis

Scott Costello scott.costello@state.ma.us
and www.mass.gov/mgis/munigis

Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Conservation Services

www.mass.gov/envir/dcs/openspace

Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association

60 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111

Mendon, Massachusetts 1667-1967, Mother of Municipalities

By Peter Hackett

The Open Space Planner's Workbook – Appendix H: ADA Self Evaluation

www.mass.gov/envir/dcs/pdf/OpenSpacePlanners.pdf

Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements

www.mass.gov/envir/dcs/pdf/planningRequirement

SCORP

www.mass.gov/envir/dcs/global/publications

